

Committee(s):	Date(s):
Epping Forest & Commons	12 September 2016
Subject: Proposed Cycle Hire Facility at Chingford Golf Course SEF 37/16	Public
Report of: Superintendent of Epping Forest	For Decision
Report Author: Jacqueline Eggleston – Head of Visitor Services	

Summary

This report discusses the opportunity to licence a new cycle hire facility at Chingford Golf Course Caddie House.

Go Further Cycling a well-established local cycle hire business which has previously operated from Debden campsite and is currently located at Wake Arms is seeking new operating premises. The company has approached Officers at Epping to discuss utilising the rear of the Caddy House building as a cycle store, workshop and hiring office.

The location of the Caddy House with car parking capacity, toilets, showers and a soon to be tendered Café, all close to a bus terminus and Overground rail station is thought to provide an ideal cycle hire location. Chingford Plain also offers good access to level surfaced and unsurfaced tracks providing an ideal introduction to off road cycling in Epping Forest. This arrangement will bring an existing operation which relies on Epping Forest for cycling access under a greater degree of control and cost recovery.

Recommendation(s)

Members are asked to:

- Approve in principle the licencing of a cycle hire facility based at the Caddie House at Chingford Golf Course, subject to a suitable financial agreement and compliance with any planning requirements.

Background

1. Cycling is an increasingly popular recreational activity in Epping Forest. The Epping Forest Visitor Surveys have revealed that 10.8% of visits are cycling-related, compared with 36.8% for walking and 17.5% for dog walking, effectively making cycling Epping Forest's second most popular visitor activity.

2. Neil Corderoy and Wayne Starling have operated Go Further Cycling (GFC) as a local cycle hire operator since 2010. GFC were previously based at London Borough of Newham Debden campsite (2010-15) and currently operating at the Forest Lodge motel complex at the 'Wake Arms' roundabout on Epping New Road, adjacent to Bonningtons Auctioneers. Go Further Cycling have previously cooperated with the City of London over the hire of mountain bikes from the Epping Forest Visitor Centre at High Beach; the demand for this facility was so high it was the reason Go Further Cycling was created as a business.
3. As their current lease is coming to an end, Go Further Cycling have been in discussion with officers at Epping Forest to investigate potential alternative locations for their hire facility.
4. The Caddie House at Chingford Golf Course has a large space to the rear of the property that is currently vacant and in need of landscaping since the departure of the former Golf Professional who had erected an indoor practice tee there. This facility had been erected without permission and has now been demolished.

Proposal

5. The space to the rear of the Caddie House formerly used as a practice tee is in a currently unfinished state and is not in use. There are options for its use including re-establishing some form of practice tee or facility, increasing the footprint of the café outdoor seating or inviting open tenders for complementary uses. These options will take fairly substantial investment from the City of London to upgrade the grounds area and create a facility. To openly tender will take at least a 6 month process and may not result in suitable investment options based on a three year lease.
6. Go Further Cycling as a local cycle hire company has approached Officers wishing to rent space for their business if possible within the Forest. There are no other cycle hire operations within the Forest. The proposal is to negotiate only with Go Further Cycling at this stage for a short-term lease whilst soft market testing and other proposals are developed for the site, the café and golf operation. These can then be taken to the open market after the Open Spaces Bill is agreed.
7. The proposed cycle hire facility would fit in the space to the rear of the Caddie House and would need electric and water connection from the main building. The services would be metered and re-charged to the licensee.
8. The agreement to occupy the space would be as a licence on a basis not longer than three years.
9. The licensee would site two temporary structures; that is, container units, within the enclosed space. One would function as the hire office, the other as repairs and storage. A proposed layout of this is attached at Appendix A.

10. A new gate entrance would be opened in the rear fence opening on to the Golf Course car park. Some landscaping and the loss of one parking bay would create a safe entrance to the rear. This work could be undertaken by Epping Forest staff and would need only minimal work to complete. Other landscaping works within the fenced area would be at the expense of the licensee.
11. The cycle hire facility would complement existing facilities at the Caddie House and contribute to establishing the Chingford Hub as a 'gateway' to the Forest. The cycle hire would bring new customers to the café and in turn would benefit from the facilities on site such as toilets.
12. New customers to the site using the cycle hire may be attracted to using the golf course and can be directed to the View just a 2 minute walk away to purchase maps and other goods as well as benefit from the information service and museum.
13. Positioning the cycle hire at Chingford will contribute to promoting sustainable access to the Forest. The nearby Transport for London Chingford train station and bus terminus provides opportunities for customers can come from further afield by public transport and hire cycles to access the Forest.
14. GFC have a track record of informing their customers of where to go, providing maps, pointing out main tracks suitable for cycling and areas which are not suitable or permitted. They take time to explain the code of conduct and briefing on how to respect other users. GFC acts as the 'eyes and ears' of cycling and are often the first to report on any misuse of the permission to cycle within the Forest. They provide high quality serviced bikes and use a 'green' bio lubricant as an alternative to Polytetrafluoroethylene (Teflon or PFTE) on their bikes. Opening hours are 10am-5pm, Tuesday to Sunday, and the business complements and promotes other businesses within the Forest such as cafes and pubs.
15. GFC's staff are friendly and welcoming and provide a 'starting point' for cycling in the Forest will encourage cyclists to use the Forest responsibly. The cycle hire facility can promote responsible cycling to other cyclists, not just their customers, through signage, information and in person contact e.g. with bicycle repairs.

Options

16. There are two options available to your committee.
17. Option 1: That the Superintendent in conjunction with the City Surveyor agree a licence to operate a cycle hire facility to the rear of the Caddie House subject to planning consent and at a rental income not less than the market value. This will enable an improved recreational offer to the public, encourages use of sustainable transport to access the Forest, enables a partnership that can help to control cycling within the Forest and provides an additional income. **This option is recommended.**

18. Option 2: To refuse the option of licencing a cycle hire facility at the Caddie House. This will maintain the status quo and will make no improvements to controlling cycling or to income generation. **This option is not recommended.**

Implications

19. **Financial:** Initial outlay costs for the City of London include connection of services and some landscaping. Landscaping will be undertaken within existing resources and will be around £500 in materials.
20. The cost of obtaining planning permission will be met with GFC. Additional rates chargeable to the new facility will be met by GFC, who, as a small business should be able to obtain 100% rate relief for this.
21. Negotiations are under way with GFC for a proposed licence fee estimated between £5,000 and £10,000 based on rateable value and turnover. If a suitable licence fee cannot be achieved alternative uses of the site will be considered if these are more profitable than the licence fee offer.
22. **Legal** – The Epping Forest Act 1878 Section 33(vi) provides powers for the Conservators ‘To acquire or erect buildings...in their judgement necessary or convenient for recreation..’.
23. Additionally, under the City of London (Various Powers) Act 1977 Section 8(2) *‘the Conservators may, for the purpose of providing or improving opportunities for the enjoyment of the Forest by the public and in the interests of persons resorting to the Forest, provide such facilities, services and works as may appear to them to be necessary or expedient, including meals and refreshments, parking places for vehicles, shelters and lavatory accommodation’.*
24. The Epping Forest Act 1878 Section 33 (xiii) provides powers for the Conservators ‘To set apart.. such parts as they think fit, for the use of the inhabitants to play at cricket and other sports, and for the better use and enjoyment of the parts so set apart, to enter into agreements with, and confer special privileges on, particular clubs or schools.’
25. If the facilities do not qualify as Permitted Development they may need planning consent by the London Borough of Waltham Forest as the Local Planning Authority.

Conclusion

26. The use of the Caddy House yard to site the GFC facility will bring an existing operation which relies on Epping Forest for cycling access for its customers under a greater degree of control and cost recovery. Members are asked to approve in principle the agreement of a licence for a cycle hire at the Caddie House subject to a suitable financial agreement.

Appendices

- Appendix A – attached plan

Jacqueline Eggleston

Head of Visitor Services

T: 020 8532 5315

E: jacqueline.eggleston@cityoflondon.gov.uk